

November 13, 2009

*Voices continuing support for the President's pledge to shutter Guantanamo*

Washington, D.C. -- Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) expressed his continuing support for the Administration's pledge to close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba by January, 2010. In response to the announcement that Khalid Sheik Mohammed -- the self-proclaimed mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks -- and four co-defendants will be tried in federal court in New York instead of a military commission, the Congressman issued the following statement:

"As an Admiral, I led this Nation's fighting men and women into harm's way in defense of the United States -- in defense not only of American citizens, but of the beliefs that we hold dear and that define us as a nation. We knew that our strength came not from the ships and planes of the fleet, but from the flag that we sailed under -- a flag that has inspired our Nation to become as respected as it is powerful and has rallied allies to our side throughout our history," said the Congressman.

"What could send a stronger signal to the world of American resolve than bringing these people to justice in New York City? The last thing we should do is allow these terrorists to cause us to abandon our American principles. We are a nation of laws, not men.

"Over the past eight years, as I served in both the Navy as the first director of its anti-terrorism unit and in Congress, I have watched the legal black hole at Guantanamo erode our moral standing in the world -- weakening our hand in diplomacy in all corners of the world and providing Al Qaeda and other extremists propaganda for a new generation of terror. No prison will ever serve the interests of this nation if it breeds beyond its walls more enemies than it could ever hold within them.

"With this in mind, I support the announcement by Attorney General Holder that five high-value Al Qaeda suspects --including the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed-- will be tried in federal court, rather than be held indefinitely or tried via military commission. I am confident that this decision would never have been made if the Attorney General had any genuine doubt that convictions in federal court would be attainable, and fully support the Administration's continuing effort to close Guantanamo."

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group*

*of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, the Congressman was the first Director of Deep Blue, the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the Global War on Terrorism. He served as President Clintons Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Congressman Sestak is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*

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